

STUDY RE PETRA [which bears on the study of Ezekiel]  
by Willis E. Bishop - 5-28-96

#### QUESTION CONCERNING PETRA

We are dealing here with prophecy and its fulfillment. Search the Scripture for yourself - check with your Bible teacher or pastor. I am also proceeding on the principle that since Old Testament prophecy was fulfilled literally, New Testament prophecy will also be fulfilled in that particular manner. For example, if you believe what the angels said to the disciples in Acts chapter 1, that "this same Jesus who is taken up from you will come in like manner as you have seen Him go" -- literally, physically, visibly -- then you agree that the fulfillment of Matthew 24 verses 26 and 27 will be a literal return of our Lord to the Earth. Those prophetic passages in the New Testament which have not yet been fulfilled will be literally fulfilled, and that bears on the question of Petra as a possible answer.

Matthew 24. This is the introduction to what is commonly called the Olivet Discourse. The disciples and our Lord had been in the temple and then left. And so I read beginning with verse 1: And Jesus departed out and came from the temple. And His disciples came up to Him to show Him the construction of the temple. And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly I say to you, not a stone will be left here upon a stone which shall not be thrown down."

And as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples [in Mark we find there were four: Peter, James, John and Andrew] came to Him privately saying, "Tell us when will these things be, what will be the sign of Your coming and of the end of the age?"

It depends on how you count. They were asking either two or three questions: "When will these things be?" that is, not one stone left upon another, and "what will be the sign of Your bodily presence and of the end of the age?"

We need a Harmony of the Gospels in order to study these questions properly. Scholars have taken the four Gospels and arranged them in chronological order so that when something is said in one Gospel it will fill in what is said in the other Gospels. Matthew gives some of the answers to these questions and Luke chapter 21 gives some of the other answers.

Luke 21 -- to show that we are in the same area look at verse 5: And as some spoke about the temple, that it had been adorned with beautiful stones and donations, He said, "These things which you see, the days will come in which not a stone will be left upon a stone which will not be thrown down." And they questioned Him saying, "Teacher, when, therefore, will these things be, and what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?"

Their questions back in Matthew 24: (1) "When will these things be?" [that is, when will one stone be thrown down from another]. Luke proceeds to record the answer to that question in chapter 21 beginning with verse 8: And Jesus said, "Take heed lest you be led astray, for many will come in My name saying that, 'I am He,' and the time has drawn near. Therefore, do not go after them. And when you hear of wars and unsettled conditions do not be terrified. For these things must come to pass first, but the end is not immediately."

Then He said to them, "Nation will be raised against nation, kingdom against kingdom, and there will be great earthquakes in various places and famines and plagues, and there will also be terrors and great signs from heaven. But before all these things [there we have an important "before"], they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you up into the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors on account of My name, but I will turn it out to you for a testimony. Therefore, put it into your hearts not to meditate beforehand to make an answer or a defense, for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all those opposing you will not be able to contradict. And you will be betrayed, even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. And you will be hated because of My name. But a hair of your head shall not be lost, but your endurance will gain your souls."

Now comes the important part of the answer, verse 20: "And when you see Jerusalem surrounded by encampments, then know that its destruction [or devastation] is near. Then let those in Judea flee into the mountains. Let those in the midst of her depart, and let not those in the country enter into her. For these are days of vengeance that all things which have been written [that is, concerning it] are to be fulfilled. But woe to the women that are giving suck [or nursing children] in those days, for there will be great distress on the land and wrath upon this people. And they will fall by the edge of the sword and will be led away captive into all the nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

Here, beginning in verse 20, Christ is answering, "When will one stone not be left upon another?" Therefore, we turn to history for the answer. That brings us to 70 A.D. and the Roman invasion of the city of Jerusalem. When Jerusalem was finally destroyed in 70 A.D. a million Jews had lost their lives. Another ninety-seven thousand were taken into servitude. But history tells us that the Christians fled at that time. For example, Eusebius, the father of Church history, reports that Christians fled at that time because of this warning of our Lord. However, this is not Petra.

[Drawing on the board.] Jerusalem is west northwest of the Dead Sea. When the Roman armies surrounded Jerusalem and were about to destroy it, the Christians fled to a place called Pella, about halfway down on the eastern side of the Dead Sea. They believed the Lord's warning in Luke 21:20 and they fled. In the meantime, the Romans entered the city and destroyed it and also completely destroyed the temple. It is said that Titus wanted to save the temple but the draperies had caught fire and the gold ran down among the stones, and some of the soldiers went in and pried the stones apart to get the gold for themselves. So this part of the Lord's prophecy was fulfilled in 70 A.D. that not one stone would be left upon another. The Lord answers the when of the destruction in verses 20 through 24 of Luke 21.

Q. When they use the word "Gentiles" here, does that mean everybody except Jews?

A. Yes. "Gentiles," or it is a word that can be translated "nations." That is all except the Jewish people.

How do we know this refers to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.? In the last of verse 24, "And Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." From 70 A.D. on that has been the history of Jerusalem. It has been under Gentile domination.

I sometimes wonder how near we are to the coming of the Lord -- whether the conquering of the city of Jerusalem in 1967 may have brought an end to the times of the Gentiles. I do not know for sure. I'd like to know. It is true that the temple area is somewhat in question since the Jews gave it back to the Arabs to control. But my heart gets a little excited when I think that we may be really near the end of the times of the Gentiles and therefore the coming of the Lord.

Back to Matthew 24 where there are answers to some of the questions "what is the sign of Your coming and of the end of the age?" This answers questions two and three. Turn first to Revelation 12.

Q. When is the time that the Russians come down and go around Jerusalem on horses?

A. That is in Ezekiel 38 and 39. That takes place in the Tribulation period and is in the future. It will take place at the beginning of the Tribulation. Israel will be dwelling safely, or securely, and between now and when the antichrist signs a covenant with Israel I see no Scripture which indicates an invasion before that time.

Q. Wasn't there a report that the Russians are storing armaments in a cave?

A. I don't know about that but I wouldn't doubt it. Even though we are in a time when Russia is supposed to destroy armaments, I understand Russia is really not doing that. They will be pre-

pared when the time comes. It will be interesting to see what happens in the election which is coming up in Russia, whether it will be strongly communistic. But in any case, they are not giving up their armaments at all. There are lots of things in the future of Israel. They are going to have some rough times, including the time of Jacob's trouble in the latter half of the Tribulation.

Revelation 12:1: And a great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. And being with child she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth.

The identity of that woman would take quite a bit of time to discuss, but I suggest to you that it is not Mary but the nation of Israel. One of the reasons is that that woman flees (verse 6) into the wilderness "where a place is prepared for one thousand two hundred and sixty days," and that was never true of Mary.

Verse 5: And she bore a male, a son, who was about to rule all the nations with a rod of iron. And her child was caught up to God and to His throne [the ascension of our Lord]. And the woman fled into the wilderness where she was there for a thousand two hundred and sixty days.

There are large gaps in the time periods in these verses. The birth of Christ was in the land of Israel and He has not yet ruled with a rod of iron. He endured the cross, and after He rose from the dead He ascended to Heaven. Then, after the Church Age, the woman fleeing into the wilderness takes place in the middle of the Tribulation.

The Tribulation period is divided into two sections of twelve hundred and sixty days. When the antichrist breaks the covenant with Israel, Israel is in for real difficulty, and it says that she flees into the wilderness for the latter half of the Tribulation period. It is at this point that many scholars believe Israel will flee to Petra for protection. There is no immediate Scripture that teaches that, but Petra would be well out of the way from some things that will be going on at that time. That is the usual suggestion for Petra.

I have a suggestion or two, but you should check this out for yourselves and not agree just because I say so.

Isaiah 16. I must say that in the first verse there is a preposition that the translators have added in an attempt to make some sense of the verse, and it does not belong there -- the preposition "to." So Isaiah 16:1 should read: Send the lamb, the ruler of the land, from Sela in the wilderness to the mount of the daughter of Zion.

In other words, the lamb is in Sela, and Sela is the word for Petra. Now, who is the lamb? Look at verse 5: In mercy the throne will be established and He will sit on it in truth in the tabernacle of David, judging and seeking justice and hastening righteousness.

So the lamb, which is the Lord Jesus because He sits on the throne of David, comes from Petra. That to me is a further argument that some of His own people are located in Sela, or Petra.

Two other passages, Isaiah 63 and Zechariah 12. Isaiah 63:1:  
 Who is this who comes from Edom with crimson garments  
 from Bozrah, this One who is glorious in His apparel,  
 traveling in the greatness of his strength?

You notice, He comes from Edom and from Bozrah.

Verse 3: I have trod the winepress alone and from the peoples  
 no one was with Me, and I have trodden them in My anger.  
 Their blood is sprinkled upon My garments and I have  
 stained all My robes. For the day of vengeance is in  
 My heart and the year of My redeemed has come.

Starting with Sela, or Petra, we go to Bozrah, which is located near the Dead Sea. So the Lamb is moving from Sela to Bozrah.

Zechariah 12:7: And the Lord will save the tents of Judah first.

With the tribes in order, Judah is the most southern [in the Old Testament]. I suggest (and it is only a suggestion) that when the Lord comes back He comes first of all to Sela, redeems His people there, moves to Bozrah in His wrath, then up to Judah, and then finally His feet stand on the Mount of Olives. It seems to me that is the order in which He will come.

[For those who are not knowledgeable about Petra, the booklet, "I Saw Petra," by Louis T. Talbot is a helpful source of information.]

Prayer: Our heavenly Father, we thank You that even though we do not know the future for sure in many cases, we know who holds the future and who holds us as those who have fled to Calvary in Your mighty arms. Thank You that we belong to You today. May we represent You well. In Jesus' precious name.

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